

Initial Study

1. Project title: **Mountain Gate Fishing Access Project**
2. Lead agency name and address: **Mono County**
74 North School Street, 2nd Floor, Courthouse Annex I
Post Office Box 457
Bridgeport, California 93517

Or

437 Old Mammoth Rd. Ste. P
Post Office Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
3. Contact person and phone number: **Kelly Garcia 760-932-5446**
4. Project location: **Walker, CA**
5. Project sponsor's name and address: **Same as lead agency**
6. General plan designation: **RR-10, MU-1**
7. Zoning: **Same as Gen. Plan**
8. Description of project: (Describe the whole action involved, including but not limited to later phases of the project, and any secondary, support, or off-site features necessary for its implementation. Attach additional sheets if necessary.) **The Mountain Gate Fishing Access Project seeks to create a parkway that actively encourages interaction with the river in the form of fishing, hiking, exercising, picnicking or relaxing, regardless of age or ability. The two main recreational opportunities provided by the Mountain Gate Fishing Access Project include ADA accessible fishing and an ADA accessible trail along the West Walker River. Other amenities include picnic and resting spots, day use areas, therapeutic exercise stations (a “par course”) for senior citizens and disabled persons, accessible restrooms, a side channel restoration, a nature trail, and an interpretive kiosk.**
9. Surrounding land uses and setting: Briefly describe the project's surroundings: **The project is located in Walker Canyon, between the West Walker River and Highway 395. It is approximately ½ mile south from the town of Walker. Steep canyon walls rise up on both sides of the project. The project hopes to acquire the seven privately owned residential parcels immediately to the north and east of the site. The land directly to the west of the site is owned by the Bureau of Land Management and zoned Resource Management. The land further east and south of the site is part of the Toiyabe National Forest and is also zoned Resource Management.**

10. Other public agencies whose approval is required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement.)
California Department of Fish and Game, Lahontan Regional Water Control Board, CalTrans

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

π	Aesthetics	π	Agriculture Resources	π	Air Quality
π	Biological Resources	π	Cultural Resources	π	Geology /Soils
π	Hazards & Hazardous Materials	π	Hydrology / Water Quality	π	Land Use / Planning
π	Mineral Resources	π	Noise	π	Population / Housing
π	Public Services	π	Recreation	π	Transportation/Traffic
π	Utilities / Service Systems	π	Mandatory Findings of Significance		

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- ☒ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- π I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an

π ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

π I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

π I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

_____	10/04/06
Signature	Date

_____	_____
Signature	Date

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

- 1) A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
- 2) All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
- 3) Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.
- 4) "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures

from Section XVII, "Earlier Analyses," may be cross-referenced).

- 5) Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
 - a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
 - b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
 - c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.
- 6) Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
- 7) Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
- 8) This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.
- 9) The explanation of each issue should identify:
 - a) the significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
 - b) the mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance

SAMPLE QUESTION

Issues:

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
I. AESTHETICS -- Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	π	π	π	■
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	π	π	π	■

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	π	π	π	■
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	π	π	π	■
<p>II. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES: In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Would the project:</p>				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	π	π	π	■
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	π	π	π	■
c) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?	π	π	π	■
<p>III. AIR QUALITY -- Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:</p>				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	π	π	π	■
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	π	π	π	■
c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which	π	π	π	■

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?				
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	π	π	π	■
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	π	π	π	■
IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES -- Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	π	π	■	π
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?	π	π	■	π
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	π	π	π	■
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	π	π	π	■
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	π	π	π	■
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	π	π	π	■
V. CULTURAL RESOURCES -- Would the project:				

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in ' 15064.5?	π	π	π	■
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to ' 15064.5?	π	π	π	■
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	π	π	π	■
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	π	π	π	■
VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS -- Would the project:				
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:	π	π	π	■
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	π	π	π	■
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	π	π	π	■
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	π	π	π	■
iv) Landslides?	π	π	π	■
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	π	π	■	π
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	π	π	π	■
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	π	π	π	■

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	π	π	π	■
VII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS B Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	π	π	π	■
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	π	π	π	■
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	π	π	π	■
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	π	π	π	■
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	π	π	π	■
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	π	π	π	■
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	π	π	π	■
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	π	π	π	■

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
VIII. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY				
-- Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	π	π	π	■
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	π	π	π	■
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	π	π	■	π
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?	π	π	π	■
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	π	π	■	π
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	π	π	π	■
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	π	π	π	■
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?	π	π	■	π
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	π	π	π	■

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	π	π	π	■
IX. LAND USE AND PLANNING - Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	π	π	π	■
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	π	π	π	■
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	π	π	π	■
X. MINERAL RESOURCES -- Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	π	π	π	■
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	π	π	π	■
XI. NOISE B Would the project result in:				
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	π	π	π	■
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	π	π	π	■
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	π	π	■	π
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	π	π	π	■

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	π	π	π	■
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	π	π	π	■
XII. POPULATION AND HOUSING -- Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	π	π	π	■
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	π	π	π	■
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	π	π	π	■
XIII. PUBLIC SERVICES				
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
Fire protection?	π	π	π	■
Police protection?	π	π	π	■
Schools?	π	π	π	■
Parks?	π	π	π	■

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Other public facilities?	π	π	π	■
XIV. RECREATION --				
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	π	π	π	■
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	π	π	π	■
XV. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC -- Would the project:				
a) Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	π	π	■	π
b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	π	π	π	■
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	π	π	π	■
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	π	π	π	■
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	π	π	π	■
f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?	π	π	π	■
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	π	π	π	■

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XVI. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS B				
Would the project:				
a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	π	π	π	■
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	π	π	π	■
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	π	π	■	π
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	π	π	π	■
e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project=s projected demand in addition to the provider=s existing commitments?	π	π	■	π
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project=s solid waste disposal needs?	π	π	π	■
g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	π	π	π	■
XVII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE --				
a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	π	π	π	■
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively	π	π	π	■

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?				
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	π	π	π	■

BRIEF EXPLANATIONS FOR ALL ANSWERS EXCEPT "NO IMPACT"

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES -- Would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

One of the main goals of the project is to *improve* habitat for species that live along the West Walker River Corridor. There are currently no species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species within the project site or anywhere in its immediate vicinity. Source: Mono County Master Environmental Assessment.

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

Another purpose of the project is to improve the riparian vegetation at the site, in order to encourage bird, butterfly, fish, and other wildlife habitat. To that end, volunteers will be planting riparian vegetation along the armored banks of the West Walker River and throughout the site. In addition, the project will include a constructed wetland and a side channel restoration. At present, there is no sensitive natural community identified at the site. All riparian habitat that is currently on site will be maintained and enhanced.

VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS -- Would the project:

b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

There is some potential for soil erosion on the site during initial construction, but it will be less than significant because the Mono County Department of Public Works will use best management practices in building the project.

VIII. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY -- Would the project:

c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

The project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area. A side channel restoration project is planned for the site, but its construction would not alter the course the river in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation because water will constantly be flowing through.

e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

A paved parking lot will be added to the site, resulting in some sheet flow runoff, but this will differ only slightly from the sheet flow and amount of pollutants that already run off from Highway 395.

h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?

The only structures that will be placed within the 100-year flood plane would be the restrooms, kiosk, and picnic tables. These structures are all of a small enough size that they would not impede or redirect flood flows.

XI. NOISE B Would the project result in:

c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?

Noise levels are likely to increase, but will still be well below ambient noise levels for this pristine setting.

XV. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC -- Would the project:

a) Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?

While it is anticipated that there will be minimally increased traffic as a result of the project, the amount of traffic will still be below levels that road capacity and design configurations can handle.

XVI. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS B Would the project:

c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?

There will be sheet flow of water from the parking lot, but it is not anticipated to have a significant impact. No new drainage facilities will need to be constructed.

e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

The project includes a pit toilet that will be serviced by a local waste disposal contractor.